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*Stories, poems,
and translations*

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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial board of *The Noiseless Spider* agrees with Henry Miller that the pangs of birth relate not to the body but to the spirit. It was demanded of us to know love, experience union and communion, and thus achieve liberation from the wheel of life and death. But we have chosen to remain this side of Paradise and to create through art the illusory substance of our dreams. In a profound sense we are forever delaying the act. We flirt with destiny and lull ourselves to sleep with myth. We die in the throes of our own tragic legends, like spiders caught in our own web.

"The only animals which we saw on the sand at that time were spiders, which are to be found almost everywhere whether on snow or ice, water or sand—and a venomous-looking, long, narrow worm, one of the myriopods, or thousand-legs. We were surprised to see spider-holes in that flowing sand with edges as firm as those of a stoned well."

—Henry David Thoreau
in *CAPE COD*

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This issue of THE NOISELESS SPIDER is
dedicated to
BERT MATHIEU

“Spiderman” is the light and the warmth
that fires this project
to completion each semester
His hard work and constant dedication
have inspired many a motley staff.

On this occasion of the publication
of his book—*Orpheus in Brooklyn*
and of this 11th issue of “The Noiseless Spider,”
we congratulate him and thank him.

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THE COLLYWOBBLE CANTOS (excerpt)

Sitting in the big brown leather chair again I felt like a pressure cooker, or, more precisely, a pop corn popper loaded with a million tiny kernels which began to explode and blossom like gigantic caliginous collywobbles. “King Borborigmi” in constant labor trying to deliver some unknown thing, or a whole litter of things kneeing and elbowing my mind. Get them out, examine them, weave them together into long strands of angel hair.

They might be retarded or even crippled, stillborn, strangled by the umbilical cord of memories and ideas wound together in confusion. Pickled foetuses of past flashes stuck in some dark cozy cobwebbed portion of my brain now expelled like concrete farts to be wondered at and placed in my livingroom like trophies and conversation pieces.

They might leap out, amoeba-like placentas, yolkless eggs sapped and sucked dry by womb mates of the brain, a Darwinian abortion of sorts, just things fingerless pointing nowhere, eyeless seeing nothing, serving no purpose other than being large turds blocking the drain. Expell them all! Get them out! Clean house! Open windows, summon fresh air for unexpected ideas, compulsively, impulsively, spontaneously flowing thru shallow channels I must dredge to make deeper and wider to let them pass freely.

Some thoughts and ideas sneak out in the night like hungry carnivores. Others like moles with blind star noses are caught in the underbrush growing heavy with the ascension of awareness like a climbing sun, vulnerable to the ditch digger, truck driver, commuter, school kid with lunch box full of goodies he wields like a hammer to crush their dim skulls.

I let them play their parts in this stage of creation, in this destruction which stands apart like a vacant monologue hinged on a transitive verb diagrammed and pointing toward no direct object. Like the taxidermist, I can retrieve the carcasses, stuff them with corn flakes and bring them home to take a place next to the pickled foetus and concrete farts in my living room. Or I could bury them and let them rot in a mountain of others like them—a growing compost heap of discarded and unused ideas I may soon be unable to climb for its size. Or I could leave them be

and invite the birds to have a feast, fatten their bellies and watch them struggle to defy gravity, zig-zagging earth bound with little bits and pieces jammed down their gizzards. Untold numbers of birds, flocks of them, and each with some particle of the carcasses within them, each with its own taste and hunger satisfied.

So I will let them come, full term, premature, stillborn, strangled, whatever. I may be giving birth to and/or creating a monster. Like some mad scientist slipping into a morgue, stealing arms, legs, and heads, etc. and sewing them together, I might be entering my head in the same way to select ideas and memories which when pieced together and shot thru with a bolt of high energy inspiration might live, a mongrel thing with being and life, a separate entity, a poem which might turn on me and eat me up, gobble gobble!

“Step right up folks, take a chance, three for a quarter, nothing to lose, a winner every time, bring one home to the kiddies, give it to your girl up against a tree, spin the wheel, where she stops nobody knows.” Or I could be like the carny who controls the spinning wheel with his foot on some lever hidden under a heavy hot dog stained canvas of a face.

It could never be nothing as I feel Abraxus moving within my brain with the delicate hands of a surgeon come to aid some heavy pregnant thing.

Who fucked my brain, knocked it up, leaving me to deliver all this alone? Could my brain be a hermaphrodite, a self-destructive freak turning inward on itself exposing a tumor mistaken for a jewel? No! It is more like a nymphomaniac, a hooker, a whore walking the streets and back alleys off the beaten track hoping for something unique among the garbage cans and pirates of the night—always moving, walking, breaking into a slow trot, sprinting on dagger heels, tripping, falling up, coming down, never stopping to catch a breath, always looking with the radar eyes of a bat into the darkness searching for something like a candle or an erection pointing the way out of the maze of convolutions piled high and concreted over the years—a way out, a break from the never ending line of customers like ideas winding thru like syphallic simpletons mounting it, weighing it down hot and sweaty, serviced and done, getting down and going back into the night like flagellates whipping mnemonic tales into a cloud of memory, leaving it short-changed and funky, red and swollen.



To relieve, relive, deliver myself of and/or from it, exorcise it, exercise it, unite with it, marry whatever it is that lives within and points, directs and shoots the seed into itself dropping propositions like demonic derigibles inflated with the gas of hope and salvation, I'll marry the beast it tries to take. It will walk down the aisle and give me away—release me into the dark cleft between the hemispheres. It will throw the rice of my introspection and dance on my tongue like the red carpet splitting the reception. Then I will cut off its head in a grand circumcision and watch it roll like a speeding pinball tripping the lights in my tilted vision. . .

— *Jeff Kelley*

How To Survive the Here and Now

The pleasure of eating
a celery heart
is in transcending
the awareness
of the fact
that after eating it
you will be all out of celery.

— *Jeff Kelley*

Cloud Roots

(a poem on being)

To be
attached to life
the way a cloud
is rooted
in the sky—

To have
the vision
of a daisy,
one blind eye
reaching
full of color—

Befriended
by the wind
sounding
like heavy traffic—

Is!

— *Jeff Kelley*

Real People

They get fucked daily right between the eyes.

Or, by mentally masturbating,
Waste seed
On the barren earth.

Sad, hopeless, hapless faces
Trudge daily to and from
Their cubbyholes of space,
Their small cubicles of contentment,
Their plush coffins for eight hours,
And they never even close the door.

Some of them sweat.
They drip and stink.

Others open their mouths,
Not to speak,
But fart—

These real people,
In their shiny, funny shoes,
And little suits,
And choking neckties,
And glittery jewelry,
And small heads with space between their ears.

Someday,
It would be best
If the spaces they occupy
Were filled with manure or a compost of some kind.

Then, at least,
Something living
Would have a chance to grow.

— *Thomas R. Violante*

Daffy Duck

(from *Looney Tunes*)

Black hooded blunderbuss
you should have been born a sheep
the better to have belonged
to this family of wolves
tar baby
born in darkness
I wish you to fly away
o fly away
but your feathers are lined
with the tin of beer cans
rattling in the hallways
of my house
your feet are webbed to my doorstep
where you search for my pennies
gold keys
to open the door of your beer truck
where you wash your legitimacy
in an open keg
gold keys
that I plant under the corner of the rug
knowing that you will find them there
gold keys

I tag your tongue with
inscribing your name and mine
in the same space

my son
your sun turns black
in the river
draining the pavement red
your heart lanced
by the weight of the tailgate
beer truck unlocked
to let you in
your mustache a black frame
for final crooked teeth

o my son
if you were a sheep
your slaughter
my grief
that sacrifice
would have been made
worthwhile.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

Owed To You

The following ad appeared in the Personals Section of The New Haven Advocate late in the Spring of 1976: "WANTED: Curvaceous young woman between the ages of 18 and 25 to share the joys of existence at 'El Conquistador' in sunny Puerto Rico. Please write to Box 300."

Dearie, Dearie:
In response to your query
Which appeared in *The Advocate*,
You aspired for a winsome date.
(Sorry my reply is so *late*).

But, I've been nursing my lumbago,
A disease peculiar to every Dago,
As are wit, charm, and flair.
So what if all my Clairol hair
Is brittle and an awesome grey?
It's covered by a new toupee.

I'm five feet six: ten pounds too fat,
Playtex, tho', hides all of that.
I have Maria Callas' nose;
My veins held firm with thick Suppohse.

I dance the Charleston and Cha-Cha-Cha,
Roistering with great Chutzpah.
In my youth I did the Hora,
Reveling in old Gomorrah.

I've seen two Popes and climbed Mt. Zion,
Ridden a camel and lived with a Lion,
Sailed the Thames, Seine, and Rhine.
Mink, sable, diamonds are *already* mine.

I've floated naked in Sodom's Dead Sea;
Somehow, I have always missed meeting *thee*.
Oh, cruel Fate, why did you so decree?
To separate me from such a one as He?

He who offers one night at "El Conquistador?"
Alas, I've been there, too, before!
Ere I venture to Puerto Rico's lesser shore,
I'd have to know you so much more.



Since I've given my full resumé,
I'll query you, if I may?

Are you gay, or a lout?
Suffer from psoriasis or the gout?
Do you play bridge, poker, or gin rummy?
Are you bright—or a decadent dummy?
(You might as well know from the start
I like my men very smart).

Are your politics rebel or Tory?
Would you go to the moon for me and Old Glory?

If your answers confirm what I want to know,
Bring the aspirin along—it's time for The Show!

—*Louisa Bianchi*

For Joe

Little Boy Blue
Come get your gun
Your mind's in the battle
And you're still on the run.

Your soul's in the swamps
Where the enemy lay
I hope in my heart
You'll forget it someday.

Little Boy Blue
Come get your gun
There's wrongs to be righted
There's wars to be won.

Your thoughts are the bullets
That shoot men down
You fight for a hobby
Not a moral or a crown.

So if it's reality
You think you perceive—
Little Boy Blue
For you I grieve.

—*Judy DePietro*



Artemisia

(after a Dutch work by Gerrit von Honthorst—1590-1656)

The scene is splendidly clear:
the widow raises to her lips the ruby chalice
wherein her husband's ashes have been mixed with wine,
and drinking it down, she sighs and murmurs through veiled tears:
"Now I'm your living tomb, my beloved."

In the wings the bearded courtiers gasp theatrically,
raising their hands, as if to say: "What a paragon!"
Of her attendants, one young woman with golden hair
seemed most impressed by this strange apéritif.
(All this the Dutch master caught brilliantly,
nor could he forget to insert, in the shadows of the curtains,
a crone with withered tits who can barely suppress a sneer.)
From far and wide, it's said that crowds of commoners came
to gape at this prodigy, the king's shapely urn.

Night falls; the widow aches. Her dreams
are like red curtains tossing in the wind.

Her straying hand has a will of its own,
and it touches, it touches.

She bites her lips till blood comes and groans and sobs
and tries to imagine the king's face, a golden goblet,
tries to imagine the feel of his large rough hand
whose caress could be so gentle, yet set her a-blaze.

But now she can only see darkly

two small red eyes like a rat's,
a sad mouth twisted into a sneer,
and an ancient woman's face

peering out of her looking glass.

— *Anthony Manouzos*

Abortion

Your hair
still holds the sun as you shut the door
and gaze up the dark concrete staircase

Slowly you climb
One by one the steps are left
behind you
In your nostrils lingers
the intoxication of
wild orange trees

The other women sit silent
on hard chairs around the bare room
Young girls like you—
you're barely seventeen—
They're glad you too have come
to wait with them

The Easter eggs are all painted red by now
you think
as the clock
minute by minute
ticks you closer
to the end
of your
time

Soon you'll be out again
You'll be out in the blue morning
Swiftly you'll walk again
among the blooming wild
orange trees

When your turn comes
the eyes of the women
catapult your terrified body
through the open door

Soon it will be over

(cont'd)

They stretch you on the cold marble slab
—lovely marble, ripped from the bowels of Penteli—
They pull your legs apart
They strap you down

Your blue Easter blouse
hangs on a chair
in your sun-filled room
waiting to cover your body
bleeding still

—*Eleni Fourtouni*

The Sacrifice—A Short Story

*“Men are not worried by things,
but by their ideas about things.
When we meet with difficulties, become
anxious or troubled, let us not blame others,
but rather ourselves, that is:
our ideas about things.”*

—*Epictetus*

I openly and cheerfully admit that Kyle L. Rhodes and I had some fantastically wild times together, like the time we put cellophane on the toilet seat and Emily Williams didn't notice it, and all those nights of playing basketball down the corridor

at 3 A.M., not for the exercise but for disturbance's sake alone, and all those countless occasions of getting smashed drunk and telling everyone how we thought they were absolutely zero.

I put none of the culpability on Kyle for my breaking down, though my parents, the doctors, and the Vassar class of '66 did. I would prefer to think the whole damn thing was arbitrary, for not only was Kyle the best damn friend I ever had, I had a hell of a lot of respect for her, and that was something sacred, for I never had the slightest bit of respect for anyone or anything before. As a matter of fact, I spent my years before her as a pompous, arrogant little bitch who thought I knew everything there was to know, and no one but J.D. Salinger could teach me anything. From the minute the doctor slapped my little behind, and I immediately told him to keep his goddamned paws off of me, I set out to do exactly what I was told *not* to do and vice versa. I wanted the world to know who it was trying to deal with.

Coming from a home where my parents were professors in a prominent university, naturally education was their highest priority, and naturally I did my best to learn as little as possible. From the day I was literally dragged off to grammar school until the moment I barely graduated prep school (I had too many unexplained absences), my life was one apathetic existence. I must amend that last statement. I cannot, in all honesty, say it was totally apathetic in the conventional sense of the word for I *did* spend a great deal of time devising plans that would infuriate both my teachers and my parents and make me look like the naturally gifted genius that I thought myself to be. I don't know if this interests you or not but if you're going to have any kind of goddamn understanding about how precocious I was, I'm obligated to tell you about some of the charming (and I use that term loosely) stunts I pulled during my maturation period.

At the ripe old age of six I had concluded that I already knew how to read, therefore there was nothing that my acne-scarred

teacher could possibly teach me that I could not learn on my own, so I informed my parents that I was not returning to school for too much of my valuable time was being wasted there. They informed me otherwise and I was bodily hurled out the door. To my delight, I was unescorted. I made sure that I was unobserved and quickly dodged to my mother's car and hid myself in the back seat. I figured I would remain in my hideout until I spotted my classmates returning home and I would then leave my sanctuary and come in as though I had had a perfectly natural day at school. Unfortunately while reading *War and Peace* (Mother still insists it was *Heidi of the Alps*) I fell asleep and when I awoke it was sometime past sunset and there was a twelve-state alarm out after me. I learned quickly though and eventually got to be a master at cutting school and so *much* of one that the challenge was lost and I had to resort to other tactics.

As I got older I joyfully discovered the aggravation a teacher goes through when trying to deal with a child who is totally 'impossible,' especially when that impossible child is more intelligent than they are and is determined to prove this fact to the rest of the class. So every day I would saunter into class ten or fifteen minutes late, giving the instructor a look that said, "You should be glad I even showed at all," and would walk nonchalantly to the back of the room and pretend I was asleep. I was in ecstasy when they would get down or up (however one chooses to perceive it) to my level and when they thought they had me in the midst of some totally absorbing daydream, would call upon me. I would slowly pick up my head, glance around the room and just when they thought they had me, I would answer—correctly! I would go home at night and spend hours looking for questions that I knew they would never be able to answer and was thrilled when they would look at me with hate in their eyes. And naturally I studied like crazy for exams so nothing could be held over my head. I was proud to be the only one in my school with a straight A academic average and straight F conduct grades. Well, with the combination of my extremely high intellect and my parents' influence, it was decided for me that I would spend my next four years at Vassar. The thought did not exactly thrill me.

I arrived there before my roommate, something I was rather glad about. I took the best bed (the one with the least lumps in the mattress) and the desk by the window, for I was positive that

I was not going to like her and didn't care if I was being unreasonably selfish. Later that same day, Kyle arrived. Jesus Christ, what a phoney. Here was this typical Vassar snob, all beauty and money, without an ounce of brains. I was waiting for her to tell me how she was absolutely *mad* about Dylan Thomas and didn't I think he was absolutely marvelous, but instead she said, "Want a beer?"

I was beginning to have second thoughts about her when she opened her trunk, which I had originally thought contained Lord and Taylor's sportswear department, and saw that it was filled with six-packs of Budweiser. I felt a wave of relief go through me. She may not be so bad after all. She smiled (she had this terrific sarcastic-looking grin), I reciprocated and we sat down to some serious drinking.

"You don't seem so bad," Kyle slurred. "What are you doing here?"

"Trying to get out. What about you?"

"My parents donated a building."

I laughed uproariously, partly from drunkenness and partly from her honesty. "Tell me, Kyle, what do you think of Dylan Thomas?"

"I'm absolutely *mad* about him!" Then she went into this screeching fit of laughter. "Isn't that what I'm *required* to say?"

At that moment the house mother rudely interrupted our party and told us that our presence was requested at a little freshman get-together tea that was now going on in the Commons. Very thrilling. Kyle and I staggered over, reeking from alcohol, but I must admit we had a fine time introducing ourselves and telling everyone how we were absolutely *mad* about Dylan Thomas, and everytime someone agreed with us, and almost everyone did, we even got one fool to start quoting for us, we would burst into peals of laughter and run away. Needless to say, we didn't make many friends and needless to say, we didn't care. I had met my match in Kyle L. Rhodes and that was all I needed.

Kyle and I were delighted to discover that we were both English majors and were in all the same classes. I filled her in on all my past escapades in school, whereupon she shook my hand and said, "Kid (she always called me kid), we're going to have a hell of a time. It amazes me that they put the two of us together but I promise them, they'll be sorry. Vassar will *never* recuperate."

And everyday Kyle and I would saunter into class ten or fif-

teen minutes late, sit in the last row and either laugh at or argue whatever our professors said. The only difference was that I was determined to make them look as stupid as I knew they were, and all Kyle wanted was a few laughs.

"Kid, I don't know why the *hell* you study so much. It's not worth a goddamned thing."

"I know but I've got to do it. My parents would coronary if I ever failed anything."

"So if you fail we'll run away to South America or something. Come one, let's grab a beer."

"Twist my arm, Kyle. Come on, twist my arm." Unfortunately or fortunately, however one chooses to perceive it, I developed the same study habits as Kyle, which is no study habits at all. I got to be one hell of an authority on beerdrinking, though.

One night more than halfway through first semester, we were having one of our usual "mocking Vassar" discussions when Kyle very abruptly changed the subject. "What kind of contraceptives do you use?"

My eyes nearly detached themselves from their sockets. "What?"

"You know, birth control."

"I know what you mean. None."

"Are you crazy, kid? Do you know what kind of *chances* you're taking?"

As much as I loved and respected Kyle, I wasn't going to let her get one up on me.

"Kyle, as of yet I have not found any male who is equal to my intellect and therefore worthy of my body."

"You're not queer or anything, are you?"

"Goddamn you, *Kyle*! No, I'm *not* queer or anything."

"Well, things are going to change this weekend."

I must have been pale as hell. "Why? What's this weekend?"

"We're going to visit my brother at Princeton and he's got some really outrageous friends. Really, kid, you're going to flip over these guys. Very high I.Q.'s and ooooh, what bodies."

"I don't know, Kyle. I've got a hell of a lot of work to catch up on." As much as I hated to admit it, I was somewhat frightened by the whole idea.

I studied Kyle's perplexed expression for a few moments and for the first time realized I had a lot to learn about life. I may have been more knowledgeable than my professors and class-

mates, but not more than Kyle L. Rhodes. At the time, it never dawned upon me that the former was also indulging. It seemed that only Kyle knew anything about these once-forbidden areas. And the more she talked, the more convinced I became that there was something almost holy and god-like about her and so I decided she must be right.

"Listen kid, you only go around once. You might as well enjoy it."

"Twist my arm, Kyle. Come on, twist my arm." I made a feeble attempt at laughter.

"Stupendous kid. My brother's roommate's name is Steve. You'll love him. I promise you. Really great intellect. Just your type. He's a Psych. major but don't worry, he's not the kind who walks around analyzing everyone all over the goddamn place or anything."

"Okay, Kyle, you've convinced me." I wanted the subject closed.

The next day Kyle and I made a visit to the local gynecologist where I got my first fitting. I must admit I was nervous as hell. I kept expecting to bump into my mother. We did meet Emily Williams. Kyle smiled that wonderfully sarcastic grin of hers. "Emily *Williams*, what are *you* doing here?"

"Well, well, well, if it isn't the *prodigies*."

"Emily sweetheart," Kyle was still grinning, "I *do* hope your diaphragm has a hole in it."

Kyle and I shook hands and walked away doubled over. I could just imagine Emily steaming. I must admit our little encounter with her put me more at ease. I figured if stupid Emily could handle the whole thing then I certainly could.

I was surprisingly calm and collected throughout the train ride to Princeton until Kyle hit me with what I thought to be a really jolting piece of information. "Uh listen kid, there was something I forgot to tell you. Last time I was visiting my brother I was kind of with Steve, you know what I mean?"

I almost died right there on the spot. "Kyle, are you crazy? Have you gone totally mad? Where is your mind? You're telling me to go to bed with your boyfriend."

No, no kid. You've got it all wrong. First of all, he's not my boyfriend or anything like that. I only slept with him a few times. Second of all, he's the best I know of and I want you to go first-class, kid, all the way. I wouldn't want to put you in the hands of some goddamn amateur or anything. Don't worry about

it, okay?"

Kyle L. Rhodes had made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of friendship.

Well, I thought Steve was everything Kyle said he was. He seemed intelligent, good-looking and not at all like the other obvious jerks I was introduced to over the weekend.

And he *was* good in bed. Not that I would have known the difference but I didn't let that be *known*. There was a short time in which I debated if I should tell him about my innocence, but I decided against it. There is nothing I hate more than to admit that I didn't know about something, so I clenched my teeth (very tightly) and tried to recall all the porno novels I had read as a kid. And if Steve knew, he never let on. Bless his soul (for *that*, anyway).

For someone who was eventually going to have a nervous breakdown over the whole thing, I handled myself quite well at the time. I tried to be very casual and acted like I'd been doing it my whole life. Inside I was dying. I damn near keeled over when he suggested we take a shower together, but very coolly told him I didn't feel dirty at the moment. He thought that was beautifully symbolic and I then decided he was an egotistical asshole.

When we got back to Vassar, Kyle insisted I tell her everything in detail. "Isn't it the ultimate experience?"

I hated to admit to her that I didn't think it was what it was cracked up to be, so I nodded my head in agreement. Inside it was eating the hell out of me. Here I was being as hypocritical as everyone else. I was as bad as that moron Steve who thought it was so symbolically beautiful that I didn't feel like taking a shower. Why couldn't I admit to my dearest friend that it didn't do a *thing* for me?

"Kyle, I've got a confession to make. I didn't *like* it. I don't know. Maybe there's something wrong with me, but I could easily live without it."

"Oh no, kid, tell me you're kidding. You can't be serious." It made me feel so goddamn miserable that I had disappointed her like that.

"Aw kid, I really thought you were different. I thought you'd see it like I do. Almost like a religious experience or something. I don't know, making one feel above all this concrete *material* shit. I never thought you were like the rest of those tight-ass bitches. I had *faith* in you, kid."



I felt absolutely horrible letting Kyle down after all she'd done for me, so I tried to make a joke of it—being Kyle's always one for a laugh.

"Hey, I realized what the trouble is, Kyle old buddy. I haven't carried it far enough to get the full *meaning* of it."

Kyle giggled, "How much further can you go?"

"I haven't sacrificed for it. Sure I lost my purity, but so does everyone at one time or another. To get full benefit, I have to carry it a step further. Like Van Gogh cutting off his ear for love. Something like that."

"I like the idea." Kyle's eyes were lighting up. "I like it immensely, but *don't* cut off your ear, kid. I can't stand the sight of blood."

"No, no, I wouldn't go that far. Something like wearing black underpants for the rest of the year. Something with a little drama to it."

"What the hell is so dramatic about black underpants?"

"Kyle, I've got it." I was jumping out of my seat. "I'll shave my pubic *hair* off."

To my amazement, Kyle did not laugh. "Kid, you are a real artist. You are a goddamn genius. If that isn't the most terrific thing I ever heard."

Kyle began to get excited as hell about the whole thing and the next thing I knew, we were in the bathroom and I was feeling very itchy and extremely naked.

"Kyle, this is the most insane thing I've ever done."

"Insane *nothing*. This is a great step towards human understanding. Kid, you are a true individual and I'm proud to say you're my friend. A poet. A goddamn poet."

"Kyle, you're 'sicker' than I am."

"Isn't life grand, kid? Let's go grab a beer."

The more I thought about it, the more heartbroken I became over my loss and you see how I had no one to blame but myself, for it was my idea.

As the days passed, I had to rearrange my lifestyle for I was now taking my showers at 3 A.M. I was becoming more and more paranoid that someone was going to discover my deficiency, which was taking a hell of a long time to grow back. It seemed to me it had come in faster the first time around.

Before I knew what happened, final exams were on the way and I had to pull straight A's in order to make up for my negligence. You have absolutely no idea how horrible it is trying to

study twenty-four hours a day while itching like hell. I couldn't concentrate to save my life and if you knew my parents, that's just what was at stake. There was no way I was going to make it, so I decided to join the ranks of freshmen having nervous breakdowns. I told Kyle of my plans and naturally she thought they were absolutely *fantastic*.

"Just make sure you come out of it on time for second semester. I don't want to get stuck with Emily Williams for a roommate."

Well, it wasn't very difficult to fake my breakdown, for it seems I was on the verge of one *anyway*. At least that's what the doctor said, but then again, what would that egotistical bastard know about my personal breakdown? I didn't even tell him about my sacrifice and as far as I'm concerned, that was the cause of the whole goddamn thing. Well, anyway, they didn't let me return to Vassar the following semester and last I heard, Kyle still hadn't forgiven me because Emily Williams is now her roommate.

As for me, I'm going to the university where my parents teach (so they can keep an eye on me) and am now majoring in Psych. This way I can get a real understanding of people. Not so I can *help* them, for they're way beyond that. But so I can get to play with them.

— *Binnie Kirshenbaum*

Stillness

Stillness is a sound
often unheard,
not a void as many would believe.

A sound of falling leaves,
mouse steps in the snow,
a baby's gentle breathing,
and a stream's soft flow.

Stillness is the space
that all things must have
if they would know themselves
as well as others.

— *Mike York*

Edwards

Jonathan Edwards, no wonder your vision
was wintry; in this rose
Connecticut River wind, light off the ice,
I am pure too; clear and complicated.

The green thrash of the river
claws, an unshelled crow,
at a surface pale and
hard enough to cross on.

A late sun like sap
redeems the hills;
this is January, fluent
with the voice
of virgin Sarah Pierpont.

— *Julie Ellison*

Two-for-a-Quarter World

It's a two-for-a-quarter world,
Where men piss and moan.

They'll come to you, smiling,
And ask "How's it *going*?"
All the while, they know
It's not going,
And so do you.

Can you tell me
Why it isn't good (or smart)
To speak your mind,
Express yourself
And try to change things,
Attempt to improve,
Add a little water,
Make things grow better,
Instead
Of looking down or away
And purposefully stepping
On a seedling?

That's murder.

Killing of the spirit.
That's death.

Strangling creativity:
Smothering freedom:
Stabbing someone's soul:
Shooting holes in an idea:
Raping a dream:
Electrocuting expression:
Putting a chain and ball around one's neck.

This two-for-a-quarter world
Is no place for the living.

It's a mortuary of madness,
A cemetery of sycophants
Giving birth to madmen,
While exhuming rotten corpses
Of smiling men asking
"How's it *going*?"

In between the changing of light, before your eyes,
You might see the meaning in which lies
The challenge of life that knows no control
And the breaking of dreams that takes its toll.

If ever a thought could mean so much
As in your head, your hand, your touch,
In time, that thought becomes obscure
Living life's changes leaves you unsure.

The shadowy hues that fill the night,
So mysterious, so forbidding, such a sight,
So desolate, quiet, eerie, but inviting
Complete in its own, pleasantly enticing.

A million mysteries and their answers untold,
Strange people with ideas so bold,
Nighttime sounds that fill the air.
Step outside, if you dare.

But what's to fear but one's own mind?
There's no mysteries there to find
Because night is no different than day.
Just an absence of light, faded away.

— *John L. Abbagnaro*

The Ancient Submariner

It comes over me from time to time
at precisely the moment I can't predict:
this urge for the submarine existence.
There's a trick to it, a trick or two
you ought to know, if you want to be
a regular submariner.
First, take off your suit of skin and bones,
after removing hands and ears and genitals.
Hang them all up carefully on a coatrack.
This is *extremely* important, and all too often forgotten
by eager novices who can be recognized
by their missing parts.
There is no trick to plunging. Just find a gangplank.
Go down to the caves where the threshers sleep,
tucked away in their lidless nightmares.
Down where the roar of the silence is like the empty eyes
of people on subways. Down where anemones
are like sweet flowers with puckered cunts at the center,
cunts with unappeasable appetites. Down where the squid
squirm like dreams of women in your seedtime.
In these caves you will find every body
you have loved and caressed, lusted after and lost,
every body you have needed and done homage to,
and now each one is quietly liquescing, becoming
bait for crabs, the crabs of your own insatiable mind.
Are you still with me? Do you have all this down?
Have you had enough? Rise *slowly*, then, lest you implode.

— Anthony Manousos

Romance at Night

Under the starry tent, a lonesome one
Moves through the hush of midnight.
A boy awakens from tangled dreams;
His gray face dissolves in the moonlight.

At the window that stares through iron bars,
Her hair dissheveled, the idiot-girl weeps.
Very wondrously, on a journey so sweet
Lovers drift by on pond-waters deep.

The sufferer is seized by the horror of death.
The murderer's pale smile appears in wine.
To the Savior's pain, wounded and nude,
The nun is praying at her shrine.

The mother sings softly in her sleep.
The child very peacefully looks at the night.
Its eyes are wholly *filled* with truth.
At the whorehouse, laughter rings bright.

Down in the cellar, by a tallow-light,
The Dead One paints, with his hand turned white,
A grinning silence onto the wall.
A sleeper keeps whispering into the night.

— Translated from the German of Georg Trakl
by *Heidi Atkins*

Remember when you were young, summertime always seemed
so far away

Winter time was just another time to play
In the fall, the leaves fell for you to pile up
And spring, the fish were just beginning to jump.

Your dreams focused on baseball and T.V.
Everything was fun, everything you could see
Life was a ferris wheel, spinning round and round
As much fun as watching a circus clown.

Saturdays were filled with fantasies and cartoons
Lunchtime was make with peanut butter and macaroons
Sundays you always visited your very special friend
Because Grandma always had lots of cookies and candy
no end.

But as you grew, things around you changed
The play times grew fewer, and your life more arranged
Always something to do or work to be done
Not much time left for good times and having fun.

But then you realize the good times were never fewer
Just, as the world kept spinning, you became a mere viewer
Looking at the world in its real perspective
Finding out things that you never expected.

— *John L. Abbagnaro*

Bugs Bunny

(from *Looney Tunes*)

- I. I rise from my lair in the ground
a glint of something in my eye
the moon is split double
by my ears longing vertical
long-legged varmint
I bound film to film
frame to ragged frame
double dealing
feeling
stealing
your carrots
red roots
out beneath the teeth
pushing shame in the vacant space
you bite on it
just the same

- II. I put on top hat
bow tie
tip toes tapping across the stage
“dance with me dance”
but you laugh at me
harebrained rabbit
dropping through traps
you’ve laid in the floor
pop up hopping
I hide the hurt
and you clap for me
clap
clap me through the curtain
stagelights turning my face red

and when I bend over
back my tail through the blackness
you cheer
then you sneer
when you see my face filled with your cabbage leaves.

o you think you've got me
priestly pelicans
hiding your pistols
under your black wings
but I am *le jongleur*
I spin your emotions
in circles around my head.

III. I paint my lips
put on an apron
I dance with myself
in the thicket of dishpans and brooms
I spin burrows
in the bramble of soup bones and fears
I make music
by blowing through my own lips
rubber lids
on the ball jars of stars
and you stand helpless
on the edge
feet firmly planted on the kitchen floor
you hold out your hand
but I can no longer reach you
midwife
in sterile white teeth
I've leaped into the grapevines naked
and my song is clothed in claret.

IV. Harlequin
with a mask that can't quite hide my whiskers
I twitch my tail
and grin
you catch glimpses of yourself
through the glare in my eyes
you see things glowing
with a fire you deny
you don't know whether to kiss me
or shoot me
as in your darkness
I steal your squashes
nibble your carrots
I chomp your cabbage leaves
and I swallow your seeds whole
growing new moons
to move moons
square on the rising sun.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

LASSITUDE (original french)

On rentre un soir chez soi, un soir comme tous les soirs. Il ne pleut même pas sur la ville. Dans les journaux du jour, on signale comme une épidémie de suicides.

“On” se trouve machinalement assis devant la table de travail, à proximité d’un rayon rempli de livres lus, relus, qui ne tentent plus à la curiosité. Les coudes appuyés sur la table de travail, “on” se prend la tête à deux mains afin d’en extraire une idée honorable. Il n’y a rien dans la tête. Toutes les idées sont monnayées; le coffre-fort est vide.

Il ne reste plus qu’à boire pour forcer la production. Comme “on” vit seul sans servante, “on” se dirige vers la cuisine. Il faut fouiller dans les bouteilles vides. Il n’y a rien, plus de vin dans la cuisine. Et si l’on fouille dans ses poches, “on” ne trouve rien. Il n’y a plus d’argent, plus de vin, plus d’idées pour faire de l’argent et plus de larmes, car les larmes ont été délapidées dans les livres. Alors “on” se dirige machinalement vers le tiroir de la table où se trouve le pistolet automatique. Il n’a jamais servi. Il est lourd à manipuler. On entend parfaitement le déclic du ressort qui l’arme. Tout le mystère de la mort est enclos dans cette petite arme d’acier bruni.

Cette réflexion devrait suffire. Si j’étais à la place de cet homme je pense que je remettrais à temps l’arme dans son tiroir ou plutôt je la vendrais. Je vendrais la mort à un brocanteur et j’en tirerais une vanité exceptionnelle.

— Pierre MacOrlan in *Les jeux du demi-jour*, Paris, 1927.

LASSITUDE

You return home one evening, an evening like all evenings. It's not even raining in the city. The daily papers report an epidemic of suicides.

You find that you have mechanically seated yourself before your work table, in close proximity to a shelf filled with books which have been read and reread and are no longer interesting. Elbows leaning on the work table, you grasp your head in both hands, hoping to extract from it an honorable idea. There is nothing in your head. All the ideas have been minted; the strong-box is empty.

There's only one thing left to do: drink to stimulate production. Since you live alone without a maid, you go to the kitchen. You have to dig around among the empty bottles. There is nothing —no more wine in the kitchen. And when you dig into your pockets, you find nothing. There's no more money, no more wine, no more ideas to make money, and no more tears, because the tears have been wasted in books. So you go mechanically to the table drawer where the automatic pistol is kept. It has never been used. It's heavy and hard to manipulate. You hear perfectly the click of the catch which cocks it. All the mystery of death is enclosed in this little arm of burnished steel.

This reflection should be enough. If I were in your place, I think that in time I would put the arm back into its drawer, or better yet, I would sell it. I would sell death to a secondhand dealer, and I would feel exceptional vanity in doing so.

— Translated from the French of Pierre MacOrlan
by *Nancy Watanabe*

What's Seen

Through the open lens,
you peak at the world—
bare trees,
crusty asphalt—
focusing your thoughts
on developing suspended time.
Black and white dots cluster
to form an image,
and, on paper,
a sailboat sinking in the low tide,
and hovering over it,
 seagulls caught in the wind.
A masterpiece of precision
exhibited quietly for all to see,
sold to a young girl
just dreaming of being *that* free!

— *Lyn Root*

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A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood
isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast
surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,
out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding
them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans
of space,
Carelessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking
the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the
ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch
somewhere, O my soul.

Walt Whitman